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# Words of Truth

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## Why I Often Say, "There's Not A Blanket Answer For That"

*By: Brian A. Yeager*

In a discussion with a supposed brother a few months ago, he asked me a question. Here was the question: "Could we summarize that the purpose of every Scripture is to save the lost?" I replied that such a statement was not accurate, was too broad, and was ultimately misleading. He argued from II Timothy 3:15-17. I warned that his statement was too broad and that not every Scripture had to do with something concerning being saved or lost as his broad statement would imply. I gave an example using I Corinthians 7:6-9 in how that Paul gave his opinion, though it was permitted by God, but it was not binding in any way. It was just advice during the current distress saints faced in the first century (I Corinthians 7:26). I gave other Scriptures that had no bearing on anything related to salvation in the New Testament (i.e. Acts 16:8, Acts 27:4, II Timothy 4:13, etc.). I even discussed books of the Bible, like Job, that really have nothing to do with our salvation.

As our discussion progressed we turned to the subject matter of repentance. He wondered if we could state that repentance is "a change of heart" and leave it at that. Again, I answered that such a reply was too generic. The fact is, repentance isn't even the same message for all individuals. He was blown away that I said that. He cited Acts 2:38 and was done with the discussion. He concluded that if just teaching repent and be baptized was enough for three thousand souls then, it is enough for now. Interestingly, he didn't even consider that "a change of heart" isn't even mentioned in Acts 2:38. Yet, he was sure he was right. His blanket statement would stand in his mind. Truly, every way of man is right in his own eyes (Proverbs 16:2; 21:2). The end of that mentality is not good (Proverbs 16:25).

For the sake our study, let's consider how repentance is really a subject matter that has no "blanket statement". Scriptures, such as Acts 2:38, are not stand-alone verses about repentance. The fact is, even in that very context, there was much more said than what is recorded (Acts 2:40). The truth is, there is often more to it than any singular context mentions. Repentance, like most other subjects, cannot be taught in a brief summary. Let's start our study with how that repentance isn't even the same message for all people.

### **Some People Don't Have To Repent At All**

The need for repentance exists because of sin (Acts 3:19). Repentance is necessary for a person who has sinned to be able to be forgiven of that sin by both God and man (Luke

13:1-5 and Luke 17:3-4). Sin is transgression of the Lord's law (I John 3:4). That is a broad statement. There are many qualifiers. For example, what may be a sin for one person may not be for another just because of a person's conscience (Romans 14:1-23).

We have to consider something else too. Not all people have sinned. Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 7:22-26, Hebrews 9:27-28, I Peter 2:21-25, and I John 3:5). Babies, mentally retarded or handicapped people, and such like individuals cannot sin. To be able to sin one has to be able to understand right from wrong (James 4:17). Can you see, from just these brief points, how no single statement about repentance would or could apply to all people? Furthermore, we need to understand when repentance might actually be required and how they might go about repenting also varies.

### **Even When People Need To Repent; There Are Differences**

Let's start this brief point of our study by looking at a man named Zacchaeus. This man had to repent of his sins and his repentance included restoring what he unlawfully took from people (Luke 19:1-10). That principle was taught long before Zacchaeus was born and he understood that his repentance required it (Exodus 22:1-4 and Ezekiel 33:10-15). On the other hand, there are men like the Apostle Paul [Saul] that had innocent blood on his hands (Acts 7:51-8:4, Acts 22:1-5, I Corinthians 15:9, and Galatians 1:13-14). Some things cannot be restored. All that can be done is to turn away from doing such sinful things (Ezekiel 14:6). Therefore, you can see that repentance was different for Zacchaeus than it was for Paul. One thing you should be able to see well is that they weren't just told to have a change of heart.

### **Repentance Is Not Just A Change Of Heart**

Consider this: *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"* (Acts 26:18-20). That, with other similar Scriptures (Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 3:8, Matthew 21:28-32, and Revelation 2:1-5), shows us that repentance is much more than just a change of heart.

### **Conclusion**

When studying the Scriptures, we are reading things written and said to people other than ourselves. We have to rightly divide those Scriptures (II Timothy 2:14-18) to apply them properly to ourselves. Most things do not apply to everyone the same way!